

Test Anxiety Reduction

What is Test Anxiety?

Test anxiety is feeling **depressed, panicky, and/or sick** before or during a test. You may experience diarrhea, mind blanking, inability to think, sweaty hands, sweaty all over, and/or feeling cold.

When you have the knowledge and skills to perform adequately, but don't perform adequately, you may be experiencing a type of performance anxiety, i.e., test anxiety.

How to reduce Test Anxiety:

Unload on paper. One method recently tested successfully **Ramirez & Beilock, (2011)**, had students spent ten minutes writing about their thoughts and feelings immediately before taking a test. This method is called expressive writing. This method is used to reduce negative thoughts in people with depression.

Before the test,

- To gain a sense of control, start work. Select the smallest amount of work, and do that piece.
- Prepare test questions, answer test questions, and then work with a partner to “test” each other.
- Over learn the material; answering all the questions provided by the text; then write more questions of your own.
- Spread your test preparation practice over two or three weeks; avoid “cramming” during the hours before the test.
- Deal with personal issues; get them out of the way.
- Find a quiet, well lighted, cool place to study away from distractions (TV, phone)

At the time of the test,

- Select a seat near a corner and away from other students, if possible, request scrap paper; make notes.
- Read all directions carefully.
- Scan the entire test before beginning; note information embedded in questions.
- Do easy questions first, marking the difficult ones for later attention.
- Select the best, most correct, answer.
- Outline essays before you begin to write.
- Use the entire time available, check entire test before turning test in to teacher.

Physical strategies

- Do physical exercise to reduce stress; walk, run, swim, dance, sing; at the very least, walk up and down stairs or raise your arms over your head.
- Do a relaxation exercise before and during study time.
- Wear a watch. Arrive to the test site no more than 10 minutes early; avoid last minute pretest discussions with other students.

Emotional strategies

Say supportive, positive, balanced, and reasonable statements to yourself.

- “I can do well on this test because I am ready for it.”
- “I am glad that I took the time to study; I can handle these questions or problems.”
- “I just need to concentrate to show what I know.”
- “I have enough time; I’ll take the time I need to check the test.”
- “Take a deep breath and let it out slowly; now back to the test.”
- “Make no comparisons; I am doing the best I can at this moment.”
- (If you don’t know an answer), “I remind myself, it’s just one question and I’ll come back to it later.
- Recognize that one mistake does not equal failure. Just as one poor performance does not mean you are worthless. Remind yourself that you have intelligence and you have goals; you can learn what you want to learn.

Resources about Test Anxiety:

- Check the Bucks County Library for books on dealing with Test Anxiety.
- Anxiety Test at Psychology Today visit

http://psychologytoday.tests.psychtests.com/take_test.php?idRegTest=1597

References

Ramirez, G. & Beilock, S.L., Writing About Testing Worries Boosts Exam Performance in the Classroom, (2011). *Science*, 331, 211-213.

To talk with a Bucks Student Planning Counselor, call 215.968.8189 or email counseling@bucks.edu to schedule an appointment. It’s free and confidential.